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NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY UNITE DURING CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEK

*Live from the first national wildlife refuge established to protect the bald eagle,
students learn how they can protect endangered species*

Without leaving the classroom, more than 250,000 students from 500 schools are expected to take a field trip to see bald eagles feeding their young, great blue herons fishing in the bay, and striped bass swimming through the waters.

On October 15 at 12 noon EST, students in grades 4-8 nationwide can embark on such an adventure thanks to Prince William Network as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual National Wildlife Refuge Week observation, being celebrated October 12-18 this year.

Their journey will take them live via satellite to Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia, where they will learn about the 500 national wildlife refuges across the country that serve as prime habitat for all kinds of plants and animals, including more than 200 endangered species. Students can also learn how they can help protect wildlife habitat and endangered species through outdoor classroom activities on national wildlife refuges.

"National wildlife refuges across the country serve as environmental education centers for hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren each year, offering young people an excellent forum to learn about the environment," said Jamie Rappaport Clark, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES...
where wildlife comes naturally!

The first national wildlife refuge set aside under the Endangered Species Act in 1969, Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge was established to protect America's national symbol, the bald eagle. Here, just outside the nation's capital, critical nesting, feeding, and roosting habitat has been protected for this threatened species.

By tapping into the 90-minute, live satellite broadcast beamed from Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, students across the country can learn from biologists and other noted conservationists who will demonstrate outdoor classroom activities that focus on habitat restoration.

Students will learn how they can become involved in partnership programs such as Earth Stewards, a program in which the Fish and Wildlife Service and schools work together to develop lessons focused on local natural resource issues, and Audubon Refuge Keepers, an effort involving local community coalitions who help national wildlife refuges carry out their conservation programs.

Students and teachers from Belmont Elementary School in Woodbridge, Virginia, and Smithville Elementary school in Oceanville, New Jersey, will have an added opportunity to interact via satellite during the broadcast. Having already become partners in the Earth Stewards program, these students will compare experiences on their respective endangered species conservation programs and ask questions of their tour guides.

Schools can register for this free electronic field trip by calling 1-800-609-2680. Educators can receive more information on this long distance learning program by contacting the Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center, Division of Education Outreach, Route 1 Box 166, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, 25443; telephone 304-876-1600.

The 92-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's largest and most diverse network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife, comprising 511 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts in all 50 states

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and U.S. territories. Hundreds of national wildlife refuges strategically located along the four major “flyways” serve as vital stepping stones for migratory waterfowl and other birds, still more are safe havens for endangered species, and others host big game like buffalo, caribou, elk, and antelope. All of them are part of America’s rich natural heritage where plants, fish, mammals, amphibians, and other wildlife thrive.

In addition to managing the National Wildlife Refuge System, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates 65 national fish hatcheries, enforces federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, conserves and restores freshwater fisheries, conserves and restores habitat, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. The Service also oversees the Federal Aid program that funnels federal excise taxes on angling and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies for fish and wildlife restoration programs.

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